

Item #: SCP-3125

Object Class: Keter

Special Containment Procedures: SCP-3125 is kept inside Cognitohazard Containment Unit 3125 on the first floor of Site 41. This containment unit is a 10m by 15m by 3m cuboidal room clad in layers of lead, soundproofing and telepathic shielding. Access is through an airlock system at one end of the containment unit. This airlock is programmed to allow only one person to enter the containment unit at a time, and to remain locked until this person exits before allowing another person to enter.

Under no circumstances may any coherent information be allowed to leave the containment unit. This includes written and electronic notes, photographs, audio and video recordings, sound, electromagnetic and particle-based signals and psi emanations. During the exit cycle, a purge system rigged to the airlock flushes the occupant's memory by flooding the airlock with amnestic gas for three minutes.

A senior Antimemetics Division staff member must visit SCP-3125 every six weeks (42 days).

END OF FILE

"You're kidding me. That's the whole entry?"

"That's the whole entry," Wheeler says.

It isn't even the fiftieth strangest thing Paul Kim has seen in the database, but still: "No description, no acquisition report, no test log, no addenda? No clue who built the unit, or when, or how many times it's been visited, or who carried out the previous visits, or what they took in with them, or how long they were in there?"

"Well, obviously Bart Hughes built the unit," Wheeler says, and this cannot be denied. The man's signature style of containment architecture is recognisable a mile out. Sleek, white, plainly impregnable without the aid of extremely heavy tools. "Which makes it at least seven years old. That's sixty visits or more. I guess there are good reasons for the rest of those omissions. Anyway... the timer watchdog says it's time again."

"I don't like the idea of you routinely exposing yourself to a cognitohazard so dangerous that we can't even write the reason why we can't write it down down," Kim says. "Especially because it's impossible for us to recover any usable information this way. You're going to go in, be incommunicado for two hours and come out a smiling amnesiac. What do we gain from that? It's just a breach risk."

Wheeler hears every word of this and elects to ignore it all. There's a vague shape of familiarity about the entry as written; there are a few word choices which reassure her, in an intangible way, that it was written by someone who knew what they were doing. Possibly her.

Kim's still talking. "We should just scrub that last line from the database entry. There can't be *anything* good in that room."

Wheeler puts her keycard in the slot. The airlock rewards her with green LEDs and begins to cycle open. It's built as a slender vertical cylinder with a single opening. The entire thing rotates on its axis. Inside, there's barely room for a single person to stand without their shoulders touching the walls.

"What are you taking?" Kim asks.

Wheeler ducks to step in, turns to face him and shrugs. "A stick of gum."

"I can get you field gear," Kim says, as the airlock begins to rotate again, emitting a low, quiet thrum solely as an audible warning that there is machinery in motion. "We'll raid inventory. Give me fifteen minutes and I'll turn you into a one-woman war."

If Wheeler says anything in response to this, it's cut off by the soundproofing as the airlock rotates.

Kim is left alone in the antechamber. He stares at the outer door for a worried moment. He presses his ear to the door for a while, but hears nothing. Not even a faint tremble from the airlock mechanism.

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Inside it's pitch dark for a few seconds, then some unseen sensor detects Wheeler's presence and brings the fluorescents up. Half of them, anyway. The others remain inert or flicker aggravatingly.

The room's interior walls are made from milky white glass (bulletproof, knowing Hughes) and plastered with paperwork, taped and Blu-Tacked up in vaguely coherent masses. Where there is no paperwork, people have drawn directly on the walls in marker pen. There is a conference table, long and elliptical, covered with more paperwork and a tangle of laptop computers and serpentine power supply cables. Power has returned to the machines and they are slowly booting. A data projector warms up and shines a map of the world over the far wall, almost lining up with a network of scribbled annotations on the same wall. Post-It notes of all colours litter the carpet like autumn leaves.

Other than that, the room is empty.

Skimming the paperwork, Wheeler discovers that nearly all of it is handwritten and most of it charts the progress of conversations. Most of the entries are dated and signed, and most of the

dates are weeks apart. The conversations are panicked and fearful back-and-forths about dozens of SCPs, some of them antimemetic in nature but none of them obviously related to one another. None of the notes mention SCP-3125.

The only name Wheeler recognises is her own, which appears on one in ten or twenty of the notes. The notes seem authentic and the handwriting is hers. But her notes also seem as desperate and uncertain in tone as everybody else's. This unnerves her.

There are diagrams on the walls too, which are too complex to decode at a glance, but complex enough to make her eyes hurt to look at them.

Still lost for a logical entry point to the data, Wheeler curses all of her predecessors. Asynchronous research — whereby the research topic is forgotten entirely between iterations, and rediscovered over and over — is a perfectly standard practice in the Antimemetics Division, and her people ought to be better trained than this. There should be an obvious single document to read first which makes sense of the rest. A primer—

"Marion, it's me."

Wheeler recognises the voice as her own. She moves around the table until she finds the laptop making the noise. There's a video playing, apparently recorded on the laptop's own camera in this room.

The Marion Wheeler in the video is seated, and looks unfamiliar in a way which takes the one watching a moment to put her finger on. Not exhausted, not sick, not physically injured; she's seen herself that way before, in the mirror. This woman's willpower is gone. She's beaten.

"You've guessed already that SCP-3125 is not in this room," she says. "In fact, this is the only room in the world where SCP-3125 is not present. It's called 'inverted containment'. SCP-3125 pervades all of reality except for volumes which have been specifically shielded from its influence. This is it. This is our only safe harbor. This room represents the length and breadth of the war.

"Every competent antimemetics research project finds SCP-3125's fingerprints sooner or later. It manifests all over the world, in thousands of different forms. Most of them aren't even anomalous. Some of them we already have catalogued separately in the main database. A very small number of them are even in containment. [Impossibly virulent cults](#), [broken arithmetic](#), [invisible spiders as tall as skyscrapers](#), [people born with extra organs which nobody can see](#). That's the raw data. Those manifestations are troublesome enough to deal with in their own right..."

The Wheeler in the video casts around, picks up a bright green felt-tip pen and a blank piece of paper. She begins drawing a shape which isn't visible from the camera's perspective, while still talking.

"But once you get a little further down the road you start to see a pattern emerging in the data. You need to have the training in memetic science, but once you have that training and you have the data in front of you, it only takes a little extra effort to arrange those data points in conceptual space and draw a contour through them. Those data points are points on SCP-3125's hull; those manifestations are the shadows it casts on our reality. You link four or five different SCPs together into a single shape, and you see it... And it sees you..."

She's still drawing. It's detailed. She doesn't look up, and her tone of voice is distant, almost as if she's narrating the tail end of a frightening children's story:

"When that happens, when you make 'eye contact', it kills you. It kills you and it kills anybody who thinks like you. Physical distance doesn't matter, it's about mental proximity. Anybody with the same ideas, anybody in the same head space. It kills your collaborators, your whole research team. It kills your parents; it kills your children. You become absent humans, human-shaped shells surrounding holes in reality. And when it's done, your project is a hole in the ground, and nobody knows what SCP-3125 is anymore. It is a black hole in antimemetic science, consuming unwary researchers and yielding no information, only detectable through indirect observation. A true description of what SCP-3125 is, or even an allusion to what it is, constitutes a containment breach and a lethal indirect cognitohazard.

"Do you see? It's a defense mechanism. This information-swallowing behaviour is just the outer layer, the poison coating. It protects the entity from discovery while it infests our reality.

"And as years pass, the manifestations will continue, growing denser and knitting together... until the whole world is drowning in them, and everybody will be screaming 'Why did nobody realise what was happening?' And nobody will answer, because everybody who realised was killed, by this *system*..."

"Do you see it, Marion? See it now."

Wheeler is at the core of Foundation antimemetic science. She had all the raw data readily accessible. There are extensive written calculations on the walls, but she doesn't need to read them, she can do them in her head. All it took was that slightest push, that slightest suggestion. Staring through the laptop screen, eyes wide and defocused, she understands how it all links together. She sees SCP-3125.

She feels dwarfed by it. She's encountered terrible, powerful ideas before, at every level of memeticity, and subdued them or even recruited them, but what she's picturing now is on another order of magnitude from what she knew to be possible. Now that she knows it's there, she can feel it like cosmic radiation, boring holes in the world with its thousands of manifestations and freely laying waste to anybody who recognises the larger pattern. It's not of reality, not of humanity. It is from a higher, worse place, and it is descending.

The other Wheeler presents her finished diagram. She has drawn a mutated, fractally complex grasping hand with fivefold symmetry. It has no wrist or arm, just five long human fingers pointing in five directions. At its core, there's a pentagonal opening which could be a mouth.

But the diagram was already there. It's plastered across the wall in the background of the video, plain as day, a meticulous collage in green, easily two metres in diameter and showing the same meme complex to a hundred times the level of detail. There are smaller diagrams of different elevations arrayed around it like spores, and its arms are spread wide around the seated Wheeler, who sits directly in front of the mouth, with her back to it.

Wheeler, watching, does not realise this, and does not turn around.

"How do you fight an enemy without ever discovering it exists?" the Wheeler in the video asks.

"How do you win without even realising you're at war? What do we *do*?"

"Seven years ago there were more than four hundred antimemetics research groups worldwide. Government agencies, military branches, private corporations, university projects. Many of them were GOIs or subdivisions of GOIs. We were allied with most of them. We were at the spearhead of an Antimemetics Coalition which spanned the whole globe and thousands upon thousands of people. None of those groups still exist. The last one ceased to exist some time in the last seventy-two hours.

"Three years ago, Foundation Antimemetics was an organisation of more than four thousand people. Now it's ninety.

"There's no war. We've lost the war. It's over. This is the mopping-up operation. The only reason we still exist at all is because we have better amnestic biochemistry than anybody else in the world. Because that's all you can do when you see SCP-3125: run away and try to forget what you saw... seek oblivion in chemicals, or alcohol, or head trauma. And even that can't work every time. It's circling in. We meet it over and over again and we don't realise it. There's no way we can stop ourselves from rediscovering it! We're too damned smart!"

She points at something on the wall, out of view of the laptop's camera. Wheeler, watching, turns to look. In an upper corner of the room there is a constellation of dizzyingly complicated schematics. Bart Hughes's initials are on every page.

"There's a machine we could build. All it would take is eight years, a lab as big as West Virginia and all the money in the world. Nothing that the O5 Council would blink at if we went to them. But how do we build that machine without any of us realising what it's for? It would be like building and launching Apollo 11 without a single engineer deducing that the Moon existed. The logistics would be insane, but the secrecy would be well past impossible. Someone would start asking questions. And then it would be over. So what do we do?"

"Find another way," Wheeler says to the unhearing recording. The fatalistic tone of voice makes her angry. "What the hell's wrong with you?"

"...I could tell everybody to walk away. I could send a little message to myself saying 'There's danger down this road, you should disband the Antimemetics Division and pursue other projects.' But I'd be suspicious. I'd start asking questions. And then it would be over."

Wheeler's now crouched in front of the video, trying to understand what she's watching. "What's wrong, Marion? Are you okay?"

"I could kill myself in here," the recording says. "But my team would find SCP-3125 without me, and then they'd have to fight SCP-3125 without me. It's going to happen soon, whatever happens. In the next two months at most. This year, it will be over. I may die in here anyway. I'm on so many mnestic drugs that my endocrine system is shutting down. Taking amnestics at the same time is the chemical equivalent to trepanation. I don't remember the last time I slept without having a nightmare about Adam, and I'm starting to forget whether [SCP-4987](#) is a real thing or just the number that I gave to my life—"

"You're not like this," Wheeler whispers. "You're stronger than this. What happened to you? Who's Adam?"

"I don't know how we survive this. I don't know how we win. We're the last ones in the world. After us, there's nobody."

Wheeler shakes her head, not believing it.

"So I'm done. I'm going to walk out of this door and forget who I am and then I'm going to be you, Marion, and you trwoll have to figure a way out of this, because I can't." She gets up and moves offscreen. She can be heard breathing deeply. Her speech is starting to distort. "God, my eyes hurt. I think ilr starting infth mlaei inside."

There's the sound of a door opening, and then a piercing pulse of sound and light which terminates the recording.

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Wheeler stares at the dark screen for a long minute.

She's never seen herself so weak, and it damages her ego a great deal to see that it's possible. She feels disconnected from what she saw, like it happened in an alternate universe. She feels revulsed and appalled by that version of her, more so to know that that version is still inside her somewhere. *It doesn't make sense. I'm looking at all of the same facts. What made her give up? What did she know that I don't?*

Who was Adam?

The answer to this question is so obvious and sickening that she instinctively distrusts it. She circles around the answer, probing it, trying to find reasons to reject it, but it's inescapable. Adam was someone she knew when the video was recorded, now completely removed from her memory. Adam was someone the thought of whose safety paralysed her with fear. Someone in the same head space. Someone she couldn't bear to lose.

And then she lost.

But what if...

(But how'd the room get built in the first place? Anybody's guess. Wheeler imagines Hughes building it as a proof-of-concept, followed by a cascading series of lucky chances which led to it becoming the war room. Someone discovered SCP-3125 at random, while sealed in the room; they wrote notes to themselves which set up the skeletal external SCP database entry and the containment procedures; most of the paperwork and computer hardware was left behind by later visitors... It could have happened...)

But what if there's another room?

Unbidden, a cute factoid comes back to her right then. Site 41 is almost completely vacant. In particular, two hundred metres below Site 41 there's an empty heavy engineering lab, an underground complex the size of a hockey stadium. Self-contained, in pristine condition, totally disused. Sealed up, original purpose forgotten. Nobody has entered it in living memory. Built who-knows-how-many decades back by a dead generation of antimemeticists.

What if that's where we built our weapon?

Do I really believe I'm that smart? That my team and I had that much foresight? That we got that lucky?

She turns to look at the airlock, running the numbers in her head.

Antimemetics Division staff, other than me: thirty-eight. Forty-two days until the next iteration. That's past the end of the year. It'll be too late. If I leave this room now, I will never be back. The plan I have now is the best plan there's ever going to be.

We're the last ones in the world. After us, there's nobody.

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Kim is so deeply buried in work at his terminal and the airlock is so quiet that he almost doesn't notice when it starts to cycle open again.

"We need to check you for notes," he begins, but then he sees that Marion Wheeler is curled up in the bottom of the narrow cylinder, panting as though she just finished a marathon run. Kim holds a hand out but she shakes her head, electing to stay lying down, knees bent up to her chest, sucking down lungfuls of air.

"What in the world happened in there?" Kim asks.

"Just need..." she gasps, "...to breathe. Be okay in a... second. Haaaaaah. I think I blacked out for a moment, might have inhaled some. Haaaaaah. I think I'm okay. I remember the plan."

Kim looks confused and worried for a second, then they replace him. "You shouldn't be able to remember anything... what did you do?"

"Hit my head," Wheeler says, then goes back to concentrating on breathing properly. She suddenly becomes acutely aware that Kim has her effectively cornered. Disliking this configuration for reasons which she's only gradually putting back together, she levers herself up to one shoulder and tries to stand. Kim puts a hand on her shoulder and pushes her back down.

"You look terrible," he says. "There's something inl fleth your neck. Do you see that?" He points at her throat, then taps the same spot on his own.

"What?"

"On your neck. I nefth hlai you've been infected by whatever was in there. We need to act quickly." He reaches for his keyring and unthreads a Swiss Army knife, and unfolds a short, gleaming blade. He does this in such a methodical, ordinary way that Wheeler almost forgets to react when he leans down towards her to cut her throat.

Almost. She grips his wrist. They're locked like that for a moment, a tableau. She looks into Paul Kim's eye, but it isn't his eye anymore. She squints, wondering if she's making eye contact with anything but a hole in space. She already feels the force bearing down on her own skull, trying to drill into it, but she knows its shape and that means she can hold out, maybe for a few minutes. She had hoped, prayed, that Kim would not succumb so quickly. And in a crazed little way she'd thought there would be at least a sign, a theatrical doubling-over as his mind was wrenched out of its socket.

Kim's wrist spasms as he tries to lunge with the knife. Wheeler parries and its tip glances off the airlock interior wall with a screech. They scuffle for an awkward second, then she boots Kim in the stomach with both feet, sending him sprawling in the antechamber. She launches out of the airlock, dives over him and sprints away from the containment unit.

She feels SCP-3125 following her as she runs, like a spotlight. She hears a crash in another part of the Site, as the first piece of ceiling caves in.